2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7



the significance of this formulation of his position is clear. It is when he shows partiality that the village under him is likely to break up. If he sides with his children his matrilineal kin are almost sure to move out; if he sides with his matrilineal kin, his children are likely either to return to their matrilineal village or, if they are adult, split off to set up a village of their own. The situation is precarious for the headman and it is very difficult for him to avoid a split in the village if he cannot keep the two opposed groups at peace.

My investigations show that few villages have contained patrilaterally-linked groups through the lives of two village headmen, unless these groups were descended from slaves. When the headman dies his successor assumes his name and social rôle. He also assumes the position of father towards the remaining children, who are in fact his cross-cousins. But his relationship towards them is not the same as that of father to children. The intimate link of the blood tie has been lost and the relationship becomes formalized. As more and more headmen succeed the genealogical link between the patrilaterally-linked groups and the dominant matrilineage becomes more and more remote, and the relationship becomes more and more casual. What usually happens is that shortly after the death of the headman and father, the patrilaterally-linked group takes exception to what the new headman does or says and moves off to found a village of its own. The case history I quoted earlier [1] brought this out clearly. The new headman had had intercourse with the wives of his 'son'. The son complained to the arbitrators in the dispute that 'he should have been as a father to me, and he is not'. The result was that the son refused compensation, and moved out of the village with his sisters to build on his own. When this happens the father-son relationship between the two villages is preserved and perpetuated, but the link is entirely formal and co-operation between them is limited to mutual attendance at funerals.

### Patrilaterally-linked Groups as the Legacy of Slavery

Slave-groups in a village are usually linked patrilaterally to the dominant lineage. This is because the headman who was usually the captor of the slaves kept the women as concubines. They were given quasi-child status in the village, so that their children

[1] 'The Split of Cikumba Village', see Chap. V, p. 127.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7



were called *yisikulu* (grandchildren) by the headman, who in turn was called *ambuje* (grandparent or master) by the slaves. The grandchild–grandparent relationship became fused with the master–slave relationship as the use of the term *ambuje* for master suggests. The slave descendants as a rule have no relatives in the neighbourhood. The Yao always redeemed uterine kin whom they found in slavery by replacing them with other slaves, usually taken or bought from the Nyanja, Ngoni or Bisa. Where there are slave-groups in a village to-day, they have frequently been bought or captured in distant places, so that their kinsmen have been unable to trace them. How much this

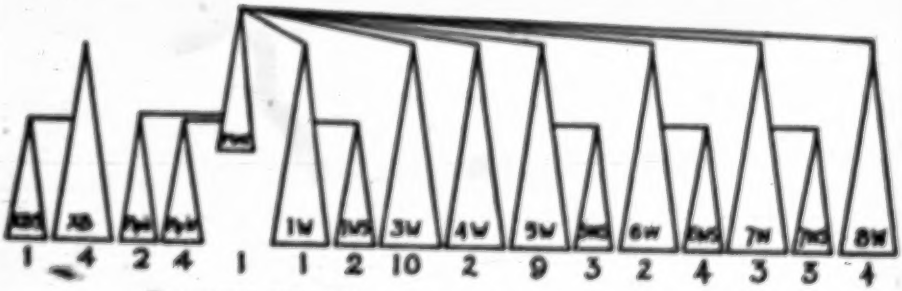


Diagram 5. The Ownership of Huts in Mpumbe Village.

has prevented slave-groups from leaving Yao villages I cannot say. Certainly before the White conquest members of a slave-group could only leave their captor's village at the risk of death. But after the White conquest it seems that many of the slave-groups left to set up their own villages. Many, on the other hand, no doubt for personal reasons, stayed with their captors in their villages, and are there to-day. In Cikoja's village, for example, there are six of these groups. Some are not very large, but only 20 of the 46 huts are owned by members of the dominant matrilineage who are not married to descendants of slaves. Eight are owned by members of the dominant matrilineage who have married slave descendants, and the remainder, 18 huts, are owned by members of the slave-groups who have married outsiders. This is a typical distribution of hut ownership. At one extreme is the pure matrilineal village such as Ali Kasunka's and at the other is the village in which the dominant lineage is barely represented. A village of this type was Mpumbe

881
533
539

"*Asambalaga ulumbo, gaaga gakata!*"
"You adults dumb, everything (is) lovely!"

Next comes *chembeko*, the fairy. There is no image but two posts represent the fairy; the *m'mishila* stands on one side of the two posts with his two assistants opposite him, one holding a bunch of leaves, the other a burning log: the first fans the log of the second, using leaves as bellows, while the *m'mishila* sings:

"*Nyumbo, nyumbo, kujikutata, nyumbo!*"
"The female pudends, where it pushes itself!"

after which the *unuli* one by one are pushed through between the two assistants. *Chembeko* signifies the passage from one part of the ceremony to another; here, from the *ingogo* to *ching'undung'undu*. *Ku-jembeka* = to cross a stream.

As they reach *ching'undung'undu* the *m'mishila* sings:

"*Ching'undung'undu nalilembekile jingawo ngwa jakuyenkeka wulimbo!*"
"*Ching'undung'undu* I have marked out if it were calico distinctive of chiefs!"

One of his assistants is told to go and get a pot of beer. When it is brought he sings:

"*Amunali, kamwaba, nawila kunyuma!*"
"You girl, little fly, wash your hands behind you!"

881
533
539
608

This is the sign for the woman who volunteers for the service to the leader, to come forward, followed in turn, as each *munali* is dealt with, by other women. The woman stands back to back with her *munali* and they hold hands, while the *m'mishila* comes and pours a little beer on their hands; they make movements as of washing the hands and then separate, the woman rejoining the crowd, the boy standing to one side until all have performed the rite. This woman ever afterwards is treated by the *munali* as his adopted sister. After this, each *nkamwali* takes his *munali* into the bush near by and holding the boy's cloth over the lad's head, he waits there for the boy's relatives to come and redeem him with fees. It is a point of honor that as many relatives as possible shall turn out to show that the boy is much liked, this being, of course, so much the better for the *nkamwali* who gets a present from each. The *nkamwali* then uncover the boys' faces and hand over the lads to their mothers who take them away to rest in the shelters.

The *m'mishila*, meantime, has withdrawn to his hut, where all the relatives later collect; he then comes out holding his "tail," singing:

"*Kwenda akajeje akwenzegwe kuga!*"
"Come and bathe those who love to bathe!"

Each adopted sister or woman guardian takes her *munali* brother on her back and carries him off to the stream to bathe. The woman sets her *munali* down on the bank and then leans across his back while the *m'mishila* comes along and dipping his "tail" into the

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7



stream, sprinkles the boy on the chest with the water. Then the positions are reversed and the woman receives the "tail" on her chest, after which they plunge into the water and bathe, each pouring water over the other. The woman rubs the boy's back and he in turn slyly rubs the back of his woman guardian. Clothes are not removed. Everyone looks on.

While this is going on, the *m'michila* and his assistants build a kind of fence across the return road; as the people start back, he sings:

*"Mate wanga akuvuma nawayo wakwaka masaka!"*
*"Fire my they are buying I myself they give me the spirits!"*

that is "everyone has got to buy from me the gifts I myself have from the spirits." As each woman comes up carrying her *mwali*, the mother runs out and makes a payment to the *m'michila* so that her son may be allowed to pass. The boys are carried back to the shelters where they rest. The mother of the leader cooks food into which the *m'michila* puts medicine; he then gives some to each *mwali* to eat, after which they partake of the food prepared by their mothers, while the *m'michila* goes to the village for the beer drinking, returning in the afternoon. In the interval the dancing men dance *chamba*, etc.

Oil standing in separate basins on the ground has previously been prepared for anointing the *wali*. The *m'michila* takes each basin and passes it across the palm of his hand on which he has smeared medicine, each basin being set down on the ground again. Taking a stick, he smears it with medicine from his "tail," and he dips it into each basin. He then comes with his "tail" to detect any woman who may have had any sexual intercourse instead of remaining continent during the stay at *Ndapala*. He dips his "tail" into each basin of oil in turn and holds it up for the oil to run off. If the oil runs off in a stream, the mother as she stands behind her basin of oil is welcomed as a good mother; if the oil runs off drop by drop, "ndoli," the woman is laughed to scorn. Her basin is changed for that of another woman or her oil is thrown away and some from another basin is put in its place so that no harm shall result to the boy.

The *akuwasi* then take the boys into the bush near by. The *magujuwisa* dress is removed, the body anointed with the oil, and fresh bark-cloth dyed black is put on. Little bows and arrows are made of small branches and grass and with these the *wali* shoot as they again enter *Lupanda*, putting the bows down on *ching'undang'unda* to the trilling of all the women present.

Immediately after this, the return is made to the village, just after sunset, the women having been busy gathering up all their belongings, while the boys were being anointed.

Some of the assistants lead the procession, the *wali* following in single file, all much subdued and walking very slowly, dressed in the new bark-cloth round the loins, with many ropes of beads round the neck and body, a headband of bark, and down the back a string of beads to which is attached a tassel. Each carries in his hand a wand about five feet long, *nyonga*, with a pattern burned in the shaft and two rattles, *maseve*, affixed at the upper end.

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
[P.190 B]
MARAVI, FR4

(*mtundu*, or among the Ngoni and the Nyanja influenced by them, *mfumba*),—say the Mwales'. His father is of another clan—as likely as not the Milanzis'—for it is considered incest for two Mwales to marry. He will tell you that he addresses every Mwale he meets, even a stranger from a far village, as "brother, sister, father, mother", (*achimwene*, *chemwali*, *atate*, *amai*) according to age and sex, and feels obliged to offer them help and hospitality—although this feeling is in most parts dying out. The Milanzis of his own generation whom he meets he considers in the same way as his cousins, (*asuwani*), and treats, or used to treat, with the same friendly familiarity as his real cross-cousins at his father's home village.

This extension of brotherhood to one's mother's, and cousinship to one's father's, whole clan, suggests that the Nyanja clans (into which possibly the Yao married) may have grown each out of an extended family group, (*mbumba*), living or travelling together. Cross-cousin marriage would follow naturally on friendship between two such nearby groups, for after a few generations of intermarriage the groups would become so connected that a man born into the one and marrying into the other would in actuality be marrying his cross-cousin. Moreover there is a tradition, at least among the Nyanja of Zomba District, which bears out the evidence of the relationship terms. Old people tell how the earliest leaders of their tribe entered the country, each surrounded by his *mbumba*, and settled first here then there ; they explain how each group came to be named, and how lasting friendship arose between the Amwale under Chief Mpoto and the Amilanzi under Chief Saima, and similarly between the Apiri and the Ankhoma, the Ambewe and the Achanza. Whatever truth lies behind this tradition, it is certain that to-day, however scattered the clans may be and however generally the young men reject cross-cousin marriage, yet a Mwale still calls "cousin" every Milanzi he meets and treats their women as potential mates ; and the same holds good between the Phiri and Nkhoma, Mbewe and Chanza clans.